

Foreign perfins report

Fake perfins reported on stamps of at least 22 countries

Perfins must have "arrived." Crooks are trying to rip us off. Fake perfins have begun to show up on the international market and they are obviously designed to cheat perfins collectors.

We have had reports of, or seen copies of, fake perfins on the stamps of 22 countries, including Germany, Austria, Hong Kong, Canada, France, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, Poland, Schleswig, Danzig, Aden, Tasmania, Jamaica, St. Vincent, British Honduras, New South Wales, Mauritius, the Straits Settlements, Western Australia, Finland, and the Netherlands. There may be others that haven't been reported yet.

Magnus Werner of Sweden was one of the first to spot the new fakes and start investigating them. Werner says he believes the creator of the fakes is operating out of Poland. Reports from other collectors suggest the fakes



are originating in Romania, or perhaps Bulgaria. There may be more than one individual involved, of course.

Werner first ran across the fakes while sorting through a mixture of perfins he purchased from a supplier in Poland. He found two Finnish stamps with a perfin "I" which was previously unknown to him. Then he found an HL pattern on a stamp of Aden. Other previously unknown perfins showed up on the stamps of Danzig, Hong Kong, and Jamaica. Once alerted to the possibility of fraud, Werner did a little detective work.

Werner believes the forger creates the fakes by tracing a perfins pattern on the back of a stamp and using that as a pattern. He then clamps a number of stamps together and punches the holes. The result is often a pattern in exactly the same position on a number of stamps of various denominations and most often with different cancellations. The method suggested by Werner also accounts for the fact that a number of the fakes reported so far are incomplete patterns or have poorly punched holes.

A good indication of the forger's ignorance of perfins is his tendency to create perfins that violate the size requirement traditionally imposed on perfins in most countries.

Even worse, some of

his
creations are
downright ugly!

About half the fake perfins reported so far have been on German stamps.

Perfins Club president Kurt Ottenheimer was the first to alert me to the fakes. He spotted a number of them when he was sorting his German perfins and he has been active in an effort to identify and isolate them.

A special appendix in the new German perfins catalog will show as many of the fakes as can be found.

Every attempt to trace the fakes to a source is met with denials and claims that the stamps in question came from somebody

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Collector warning:

Be wary of "previously unreported" perfins offered at high prices

else via somebody else. In other words, tracing the stamps is proving more than difficult.

It is ironic that somebody somewhere is forging perfins when for decades a stamp with a perfin in it has been considered "damaged" and relegated to the castoff box regardless of the catalog value of the stamp in question.

Perhaps it means that perfins have really come into their own.

Perhaps collectors are paying enough for perfins to make it worth the time and effort of the crooks.

There are, of course, some fake perfins that we have known about for years. The fake board of trade perfin of Great Britain is well known. The OFICIAL perfins of Guatemala have been faked and there have been numerous faked E perfins on the stamps of Bavaria. A few others have showed up from time to time and have been publicized in the *Bulletin* and elsewhere.

What is disturbing about this new rash of fakes is that the creator seems to be working indiscriminately and in volume. He (could it possibly be a she?) is letting his imagination create fakes that may well muddy the waters for years to come. Worse yet, they could trick collectors into spending money for what they may think are "previously unknown" perfins, like the HL of Aden and the I of Finland reported by Werner.

Everything I have heard indicates that the fakes coming out of Europe have not been produced on U. S. stamps. If the creator is not stopped, however, he may become a problem for U. S. collectors as well.

We invite anyone with additional information about fake perfins to pass it along to us so we can share it with members.

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Spotting the fakes

Some fakes are easy to spot, but others are tough to catch. Significantly oversize or overly elaborate designs can be a giveaway. As noted by Werner, several stamps with the perfin in exactly the same position—and with different postmarks can be a warning signal. Irregularly punched holes, or irregular pattern designs can also be an indication that the pattern was punched by hand rather than by a perforating machine. Patterns that are unlisted in current catalogs or differ from current catalog listings should be regarded with caution.